

Iraqi Media Watch: February 6, 2006

Current Translations from the Iraqi Press

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Al-Rafidayn

Mash'an al-Jubouri, an anti-American Baathist member of the Iraqi Parliament and the head of a list that won three seats in the recent election is said to be charged with financial corruption. He is out of the country, therefore efforts are being made, according to the paper, to get him back to Iraq for a possible trial. He still did not lose his seat or the protection associated with it.

It also ran an article on the new effort by our esteemed Ambassador—and the Ambassador of the UK—to establish a new entity made of the heads of the winning lists. This is a disaster. First it has no constitutional basis. Second, it is going to undermine the position of the prime minister. Third, it has nothing to do with what the people wanted when they cast their votes. Worst, it is being called, at least in media reports as "Majlis Ahl al-Hall wa al-Aqd" (the Council of the Movers and Shakers, so to speak). This term dates back to the days immediately following the death of the Prophet, when the majority of Muslims were pushed aside and a few elite decided who gets what, when and why. The Ambassador, who has no business reshaping the form of the Iraqi government after a constitution was passed seems to be more eager to have a seventh century system of Shoura. Can someone tell Khalilzad that he is not L. Paul Bremer IV?

Meanwhile, Moqtad al-Sadr is in Syria to "strengthen the relation between the two countries and peoples and to stand with Syria against the Western and American pressure." Moqtada has enjoyed a rising political advantage recently since he joined the UIA list, but his biggest enemy has been, and remains to be, himself. He should get a good advisor to tell him what to say, when he should speak and when he should shut up. But don't count on it.

Az-Zaman

The city of Karbala was closed to visitors and search is underway for some suicide bombers who managed to get in the city lately, reports the paper. By the way, Karbala is the site of the largest Shi'a display of mourning these days in commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, the Prophet's grandson. Some 2 to 3 million people will be in town in the upcoming days.

It also reports the capture of the number-four aide to Zarqawi, a fellow named Abu Dharr. Any capture of terrorists should be welcome news.

Also, it quoted the Iranian President, Ahmadinejad, as saying "thank God for the stupidity of our enemies." Iran took the opportunity of the latest developments about its nuclear program and stopped all dealings with the monitors.

Al-Sabah

This paper also writes about the corruption case of Mash'an al-Jubouri (see above) but goes further as accusing him of using the money to pay the insurgents, quoting the head of the Anti-corruption Committee. The Iraqi Minister of Finance estimate the money in the millions of dollars.

The Minister of Transportation (loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr) decided to close the Basra airport citing as a cause the "abuse of travelers by the British forces" who seem to have mistreated him as well. The City Council of Basra went along with the decision. There is a long-standing dispute between the British forces and the Basra City Council and there is an Iranian factor also in the mix.

It also writes about the Khalilzad pet-council, quoting the Kurdish deputy, Othman, who said it is an American idea. This paper calls it "Majlis al-Uqala" (the Council of Rational [People]," as if the rest of the Parliament and other Iraqis are a bunch of fools. Where do they get these names from? Could it be some journalists expressing how curious this idea is anyway, not to mention its unconstitutionality?

Tariq al-Sha'ab

This paper reports on the illegal selling of Iraqi artifacts. The incident in question involves the Polish forces. This has been and will continue to be one of the worst problems in the new Iraq. History will not report the neglect of Iraqi arch sites. But don't worry about history. As President Bush was quoted by a prominent writer, "We will all be dead" when history gets to talk about what we do now.

It also reports that the Shi'a and the Kurds demanding that the "Council of the Rational People" is given an advisory role only. That is to say to the Ambassador, in polite terms, that his idea is completely unnecessary.

Karbala News

The Sadr movement rejects the idea of establishing a "Council of the Rational People" because it is meant to get the former prime minister Iyad Allawi from the window after he failed to get in from the door. They also reject it because "it will cancel the essence of the elections and will hinder the new government," according to Sadr's aide, al-A'raji.

Al-Mada

Adel Abdulmahdi (a close associate to the Hakim family) has the best chances of being the next Iraqi PM.

Al-Sabah al-Jadid

Following this tradition, the paper quotes the former Iraq Minister of Finance, Mahdi al-Hafidh, that no Iraqi agency knows how much money spent in Iraq for reconstruction purposes. He

lamented that what was promised to be another Marshall Plan in Iraq ended up being nothing like it. He probably forgot that the Marshall Plan did not suffer the kind of corruption that went on in Iraq since day one and up until today. If it is any help to this poor soul (or isn't he), no American agency knows how much money was spent on Iraqi reconstruction either.

[Al-Mu'tamar](#)

This paper writes on the possibility of al-Hakim's stepping down from the leadership of the UIA list if his candidate Adel Abdulmahdi gets selected to the PM position, because no party in the UIA may combine the PM position and the leadership of the list. Al-Ja'afari, head of the Da'awa Party will most likely be the new leader.

Also, it quotes the Trade Ministry's confirmation that the food ration in Iraq will not contain any products from Denmark. This, as you know, is the Iraqi version of the reaction to the publication of those tasteless cartoons about the Prophet Muhammad. If you like Danish cheese and you are going to Iraq, make sure to pack your own.